



## ELK GROVE COMMUNITY SERVICES DISTRICT

Fire ■ Emergency Medical Services ■ Parks & Recreation

### FIRE DEPARTMENT

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#### Media Release

*For Immediate Release*

Date: May 29, 2003

## LIFE JACKET LOAN-OUT PROGRAM GETS BOOST BY BOAT U.S. FOUNDATION

**Elk Grove, CA** – The Elk Grove Community Services District (CSD) Fire Department will join the ranks of more than 300 volunteer groups and waterfront businesses supported by the Boat U.S. Foundation to keep kids safe this summer through a free life jacket loan-out service. The Fire Department was selected by Boat U.S. Foundation earlier this year to receive a grant that provides a dozen infant, child, and youth sized life jackets and other supporting materials.

“The warmer temperatures are luring lots of people to local waterways. The conditions on the water are much more dangerous than they might realize,” explains Elk Grove CSD Fire Engineer, Steve Horning. “A swimming pool with lifeguards on staff would be a better choice for non-boaters, but if they come to the waterways, they need to be prepared with the proper equipment – starting with a life jacket”

Horning manages Elk Grove CSD Fire Department’s life jacket loan-out program based at Fire Station 71. Since the Memorial Day weekend, only two youth life jackets have been borrowed. Horning and others at the Fire Department organized this afternoon’s event featuring children modeling the new life jackets from the Boat U.S. Foundation to publicize the free service available to Elk Grove residents.

“We want people to know that they can come to the fire station and pick up a jacket at no charge. If they have visitors coming with them to the water for the day, or they find that their child has outgrown the jacket they had last year and they need a temporary fix, they can drop by, check out a jacket, and make sure those kids are safe,” said Horning.

The new inventory of youth life jackets provided by Boat U.S. Foundation builds upon the Fire Department’s free loan-out program initially established in 1997 with the California Department of Boating and Waterways. The service provides available youth and adult sized jackets on a checkout basis for the day or the weekend. Residents need only provide a copy of their driver’s license and contact information to borrow a life jacket free of charge.

According to the Fire Department, a child can drown in less than three minutes. Drownings are quick and usually quiet. Signs of distress may be misconstrued for water-play or simply non-existent. Properly fitted life jackets are a valuable tool in keeping kids and adults safe in the water. Fire officials also advise that air filled swimming aids such as “water wings” are not considered safety devices and are not substitutes for life jackets or other Coast Guard approved Personal Floatation Devices (PFDs). Other tips provided by the Fire Department include:

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- Closely supervise all children around the water. Do not rely on PFDs or swimming lessons to serve as substitutes for adult supervision.
- Talk with older kids about staying away from creeks, rivers, canals, or other waterways. Impromptu swimming holes or other “hang outs” along the water can be isolated and dangerous.
- Bring a cell phone along on your trip to the water to call for help if you need it (Dial 9-1-1)
- Consider enrolling in a CPR class to learn the skills to render aid, if it is needed.
- Consider swimming at a public facility staffed with trained lifeguards instead of local waterways.

Elk Grove joins seven fire service agencies in the greater Sacramento area providing Life Jacket Loan Out services. If you live in Elk Grove, visit Fire Station 71 at 8760 Elk Grove Blvd. to take advantage of this program or contact (916) 686-5426 for more information. Those outside the Elk Grove area are advised to contact their local Fire Department for more information.

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